1: Holmberg--68 (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
845

"In all of the births which I witnessed, except that of the twins, the mothers had no difficulty in delivery. The time of labor varied from 1 to 3 hours, but never extended beyond that limit. In all instances the babies were born head first."

1: Holmberg--70 (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 845, 853

"The Siriono regard multiple births as unnatural. Twins are believed to be caused by the father or the mother having eaten a double ear of corn. In fact, any plant which grows double, such as maize, manioc, or camote, is carefully avoided by adults lest multiple births result. Such plants are always fed to children. Although twins occur occasionally, informants knew of no cases in which more than two children were born at one time.

When twins are born, both are allowed to live. One of them frequently dies, however, because the mother is unable properly to attend both. Although cowives or sisters having no young children usually suckle one of a pair of twins for a short time after birth, there is, except in the case of orphans, a considerable reluctance to take care of anyone else's child for any prolonged period."

"The following are observations on the birth of a pair of twins at Tihaera on the night of January 17, 1942. Up until the time of the birth, of course, no one had expected a pair of twins—the parturient mother, Eakwantúi (Tapir), least of all. Before the birth she had assured me time and again that she would have but one child.

In the case of this pair of twins, the first signs of birth appeared almost a month and a half before the children were actually born. About 6 a.m. on December 1, 1941, the woman began to feel labor pains and informed her husband. He, following the Siriono custom, picked up his bow and arrows and went out to hunt. (6) The usual preparations

6. The reason for this is to secure a name for the child.

were made for the birth, such as loosening the earth underneath the hammock and hanging up the childbirth rope. After an hour or so, however, labor pains subsided, and the woman went about her usual duties in the house. At noon she smeared some uruku on her face to facilitate the birth, but by the time her husband had returned from the hunt nothing further had happened. He had secured four toucans and two squirrels. These were eaten by him and the families of his in-laws, but his wife did not eat any of these animals as they were taboo to her.

After the first labor pains, life proceeded normally, the prospective father and mother however, remaining close to the house. On December 4, at about 2 p.m., Eakwantúi

again began to feel labor pains. Again her husband picked up his bow and arrows, and preparations were made for the birth. On this day labor pains were considerably stronger than before. Eakwantúi lay in her hammock in great pain, muttering 'ǎedídi erási' ('I am child sick'). As her cries got louder, most of the women of the band gathered and sat down in [71] neighboring hammocks. Children were also present, boys and girls as well as babes in arms. No men were intentionally present, although some lay nearby in their hammocks, paying no attention to the proceedings. After about 10 minutes of waiting for the birth to take place, someone at the other end of the house announced the arrival of a party with manioc brought in from an old garden some distance away. The suffering woman was immediately abandoned; everyone made a rush to see whether he could get some manioc. In a short while the labor pains ceased, and at about 6 p.m. Eakwantúi's husband returned from the hunt with a squirrel, which was eaten by his sister.

Nothing further happened, except that the prospective parents had occasional intercourse to hasten the delivery of the child, until December 17, when Eakwantúi again began to feel labor pains about 7:30 in the morning. Her husband stretched the childbirth rope over the hammock before going out to hunt. Tatúi (Armadillo), the husband's sister, swept the floor under the hammock and loosened the earth with a digging stick. An old woman, not an immediate relative, performed a solo dance at the head of

Eakwantúi's hammock to facilitate the birth. Again present were most of the women and children of the band. After about an hour the birth pangs subsided for the third time. At nightfall Eakwantúi's husband returned with a small tortoise, which was eaten by his brother-in-law.

Between December 17 and January 17 there was no further progress toward labor, but there was considerable talk on the part of the other women, who expected that Eakwantúi would die. On the whole, however, they paid little attention to her although her sister-in-law, Eičazi (Mother-of-Clubfoot) said to me, 'ḳóse móse mbía máno akendási' ('People have died in childbirth before'). During this period both Eakwantúi and her husband stayed close to camp. He did not go hunting for more than a day at a time, and the only times she left camp were to have intercourse to stimulate the birth of the infant.

Finally, on January 17, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Eakwantúi again began to have labor pains. Because of the previous false alarms almost no attention was paid to her at first. Her husband went hunting as usual, although he explained that it was too late in the afternoon to get game. About 5 p.m. the labor pains began to grow stronger, and Eakwantúi's sister-in-law began to rub her stomach a little. She herself was pulling and rubbing her breasts during the pains. This time her husband's sister's husband tied a piece of pole over the hammock with lianas, and she grasped on to this for support while trying to give birth. Receiving very little attention, she continued in pain until about 5:30 p.m., when her husband returned from the hunt with a small turtle. This was

immediately prepared and eaten by one of his sisters-in-law. A girl child was finally born about 7 p.m., dropping through the strings of the hammock, and about 3 minutes afterward, a boy. As soon as the girl was born, the father got out of his hammock and assisted Eakwantúi by supporting her under the arms. When the boy was born, there was terrific confusion among the women, who crowded so close to the mother that she could hardly breathe, but none made an effort to help her. After the second birth the mother got out of the hammock to expel the afterbirth. Both children were lying in the dirt underneath the hammock, showing few signs of life. The mother appointed Araia, a cowife, to take care of one of the children. When Araia picked up the boy, all the women cried, 'Dézi eráNkwi' ('penis for the mother,' i.e., the boy for the mother), so she put the boy down and took up the girl. The mother, who had expelled the placentas in the meantime, called for a basket. From it she took a small blade of bamboo and handed it to her husband. He first severed the cord of the girl about 2 inches from the placenta and then cut off a piece about 4 inches long, which Araia, the second wife, put on her leg before tying it under her hammock. The cord of the boy was then cut in the same manner. It was now about 8 p.m., and almost everyone who had been observing the birth, retired to his hammock to sleep.

After the rest had left, the mother and Araia remained seated on the ground with the two children. The mother began to scrape up the bloody earth from underneath the

hammock with her hands, pushing it into a small hole which her sister-in-law, Tatúi (Armadillo), had made for that purpose near the head of the hammock. When all of the blood-stained earth had been placed in the hole, the mother carefully put the two placentas on top. Then both of the women began to shape the children, first straight[71]ening their legs, then pushing their hips inward, and finally pressing their heads slightly from front to back—'to make them beautiful,' as Araia told me. Both infants were then given a hasty bath from a calabash of water, after which the two women, sitting on the ground, gave the babies suck. When I retired, at about 2 a.m., both women were still attending the infants and sitting in the same position they had assumed after the birth.

On the following morning, January 18, I returned to the hut about 6 a.m. The mother was then holding both of the infants, but when I came into the hut, she passed the female to Araia. The mother had not yet taken a bath; the blood from the birth was smeared all over her legs. Her husband was lying in the hammock, eating maize. The women spent some more time in shaping the limbs and pressing the hips and heads of the infants and then gave them a bath. Eakwantúi and Araia next began to eat roasted maize prepared for them by the 8-year-old daughter of the former. After eating the maize, the two women were brought some fruits of the aguaí and motacú. They continued to roast and eat until about 2 p.m., when they entered their hammocks for the first time since the birth the night before. At 8 o'clock that evening both women were still fast asleep in their hammocks with the infants upon their breasts. The father had lain in his hammock

all day.

About 8 a.m. on January 19 the father took a bath in the river. When he returned, Eakwantúi placed two baby slings—newly made and covered with uruku—around his neck, as well as two necklaces of coati teeth. He was then scarified on the legs by Isi, his father's brother. Meanwhile, the two infants were given their first haircut by the mother. During this operation they howled continually. After being scarified, the father's legs were washed and smeared with uruku. He then returned to his hammock and began to eat maize. I asked him what he could eat and what he could not eat at this time, and he gave me the following list of foods, which he said applied to the women as well:

Foods not taboo	Taboo foods
Peccary.	Coati.
Tapir.	Anteater.
Duck.	Harpy eagle.
Turtle.	Howler monkey.
Cormorant.	Guan.
Spider monkey.	Toucan.
Capuchin monkey.	Paca.
Deer.	Parrot

Macaw.
Fish.
Curassow.
Squirrel.
Agouti.
Alligator.
All vegetable foods.
All fruits except papaya.
Jaguar.
Porcupine.
Papaya.

When the mother finished giving the infants a haircut, the depilated hair was wrapped into two separate cotton balls and hung around the necks of the two women. The mother now gave the boy infant to her husband to hold while she went out to defecate. When she returned, he removed the baby slings and the coati necklaces and put them around her neck. He was then given a haircut by his sister, the hair clippings being thrown in the hole with the afterbirth. Feather ornaments were then put in his hair, in the traditional fashion by his sister. After he had been decorated, he scarified the legs of the mother and of Araia, who was taking care of the female infant. Both of the women had previously bathed. They were then given a haircut, and feather ornaments were glued into their hair. Cotton string covered with uruku was also wound around their arms, legs, and necks. By the time these decorations were complete, the day had almost ended, and

after an evening meal of maize all retired to their hammocks.

Early the next morning, January 20, the members of the family smeared uruku on their faces, arms, and legs. The father took off his old wrist guard and put on a new one. Both of the women and the father hung necklaces made of the base of [73] the quill feathers of the hawk around their necks. The women were also wearing necklaces containing the depilated hair of the infants. Several small, loosely woven baskets were made by the mother, and these were filled with ashes.

At 8 a.m. the party left for the bush on a trail leading out from the east side of the house. The father of the twins and his two wives were accompanied by one of his nephews who led the party with a basket of ashes which he strewed along the trail. The two women followed behind and also scattered ashes. The mother likewise carried a calabash of water, but she did not sprinkle this along the way. The father brought up the rear of the party, carrying nothing but his bow and two arrows. Not a word was said as the party proceeded along the way.

After walking about 10 minutes, when there were no more ashes left in the baskets, the party made a halt. The mother sat down and placed the two children in her lap. The father left, shortly returning with a green leaf of the motacú palm from which the mother then began to weave a carrying basket. The father and his nephew went off in quest of firewood, soon returning. The firewood was put in the basket, which was placed on the

father's back, and the party set out for the house. Just before arriving, however, a small stick was stuck into the ground, and the empty baskets, which had contained the ashes, were hung on it. The party then returned to the hut. Here a new fire was kindled and the mother gave the twins a bath from the calabash of water which she had been carrying. The father shortly left the house again and brought back a ripe leaf of the motácú palm, from which the mother wove a basket. When this was completed, she placed in it all the remains from the birth which had been lying in the hole in the ground at the head of the hammock, leaving the basket standing under the hammock. She then went about her regular household duties, and the father went out on the hunt. The period of couvade was officially over.

The feather ornaments which are glued into the hair after the birth of a child are worn for about a month afterward. In the case of the above-mentioned twins, the feathers were not cut out of the parents' hair until February 24. The afterbirth, moreover, was left standing in the basket underneath the hammock for 16 days before it was taken by the mother deep into the bush and thrown away."

1: Holmberg--97 (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 105, 152, 845

"The treatment of the sick and the aged in Siriono society appears indirectly to reflect hunger frustration. When a person becomes too old or too sick to hunt, to gather food, to bear children, or otherwise to take an active role in the society, he becomes a liability. If treated indulgently, the sick and aged might prove such a burden as actually to threaten the survival of the group. Consequently, people who are extremely ill or decrepit and whose period of usefulness is over are abandoned to die.

It might seem strange that the Siriono do not follow a similar practice toward deformed infants. Attention has already been called to the fact that some 15 percent of native infants are born with clubfeet. Considering that only about one in five such infants reaches adulthood, marries, and raises a family, it is rather surprising that the Siriono do not kill or abandon them when they are born. But such is not the case. During infancy clubfooted children are treated with as much love and respect as normal children. There are doubtless several reasons for this. In the first place, children enjoy a favored status in Siriono society. They are loved to excess and overindulgently treated. While a Siriono thinks nothing of abandoning the aged or sick adult, he would look with horror and disgust at anyone who abandoned or killed a child. In the second place, deformed infants, unlike the dependent aged, do not threaten the food supply of others. They nurse until they are about 3 years of age, and even as young children they eat much less than an aged adult. Finally, there is at least a 20 percent chance that a deformed infant will grow up to be a useful member of society, while it is a certainty that an aged dependent will always remain a burden."